

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SS-15
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R 060701Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3121
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION BERLIN
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 3299

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SCUL, RO
SUBJECT: ALLEGATIONS GOR IS HARMING CULTURAL PATRIMONY

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY HAS OBTAINED COPY OF RECENT LETTER ALLEGING THAT USING EARTHQUAKE AS EXCUSE, GOR IS ATTEMPTING TO ABSORB COLLECTIONS FROM SMALLER, SEMI-AUTONOMOUS MUSEUMS AND IS NEEDLESSLY DESTROYING HISTORICAL BUILDINGS. WE CAN CONFIRM SEVERAL OF SPECIFIC CHARGES. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY HAS OBTAINED COPY OF UNDATED AND UNSIGNED BUT OBVIOUSLY RECENT LETTER TO RFE ROMANIAN SERVICE CHIEF NOEL BERNARD WHICH MAKES STRONG ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING EFFORTS BY SOME ELEMENTS IN GOR TO USE EARTHQUAKE AS PRETEXT TO
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UNDERMINE AND ABSORB SMALLER, QUASI-PRIVATE MUSEUMS LOCATED IN BUCHAREST. LETTER LISTS SIX SUCH MUSEUMS BY NAME, CLAIMS THEIR ARTISTIC COLLECTIONS WERE REMOVED TO NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART FOR "SAFE-KEEPING" IMMEDIATELY AFTER EARTHQUAKE IN SPITE OF FACT THAT BUILDINGS HOUSING COLLECTIONS RECEIVED LITTLE DAMAGE, AND NOTES THAT GOR HAS GIVEN NO INDICATION WHEN COLLECTIONS WILL BE RE-

TURNED. LETTER FURTHER ARGUES THAT COLLECTIONS WERE USUALLY CONTAINED IN FORMERLY PRIVATE HOUSES WHICH IN THEMSELVES FORM INTEGRAL PART OF ROMANIAN CULTURAL PATRIMONY AND FINDS OMINOUS THAT NO DISPOSITION OF THESE LOVELY OLD HOMES HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED. FINALLY, LETTER CITES SCINTEIA ARTICLE OF APRIL 28 REPORTING THAT MANY OF THESE COLLECTIONS WILL BE DISPLAYED AT NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART THROUGH CALENDAR 1977 AND ARGUES THAT LIMITED EXHIBITION OF PARTS OF THESE COLLECTIONS IS UNSATISFACTORY ALTERNATIVE TO FORMER PERMANENT ACCESS AT PREVIOUS LOCATIONS.

3. IN SECOND MAJOR SECTION, LETTER STRONGLY DEPLORES WHAT IT TERMS UNWARRANTED DEMOLITION OF NATIONAL HISTORICAL BUILDINGS AND PARTICULARLY CHURCHES. IT CITES TWO BUILDINGS (ONE--THE IENII CHURCH ON THE MAIN BOULEVARD) ALREADY DEMOLISHED, FOUR MORE CHURCHES (INCLUDING FAMOUS ST. GEORGE THE NEW AND ST. SPIRIDON) IN DANGER, THEN CLAIMS THAT LAWS PROTECTING HISTORICAL MONUMENTS ARE TREATED AS "MERE SCRAPS OF PAPER." MOTIVATION FOR THIS "CRIMINAL" ACTIVITY, LETTER CONCLUDES, MUST BE EITHER A WILLFUL "ANTI-CULTURAL" GOVERNMENT POLICY OR SHEER STUPIDITY WHICH INDEED RUNS CONTRARY TO CEAUSESCU'S ACTIONS EARLIER TO SAVE SEVERAL CHURCHES AND WIDE PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF LAND USE PLANNING PROGRAMS.

4. SCINTEIA ARTICLE REFERRED TO BY LETTER CONTAINS INTERVIEW WITH NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART DIRECTOR ALEXANDRU
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CEBUC IN WHICH HE DEFENDS "ABSOLUTE NECESSITY" OF MOVING THESE COLLECTIONS TO SAFE QUARTERS, EMPHASIZES MEASURES TAKEN TO PRESERVE AND DISPLAY THEM, BUT GIVES NO INDICATION OF THEIR EVENTUAL RETURN OR FINAL DISPOSITION.

5. COMMENT: WE UNDERSTAND LETTER WAS DRAFTED BY ONE OR MORE PROMINENT BUCHAREST ARCHITECTS. WE CAN CONFIRM THAT MANY IF NOT MOST OF THE SMALLER COLLECTIONS WERE MOVED TO LARGE GOVERNMENT MUSEUMS IMMEDIATELY AFTER EARTHQUAKE, OFTEN WITH GREAT HASTE AND LITTLE CARE FOR HANDLING. DIRECTORS OF TWO COLLECTIONS HAVE TOLD US THEY HAVE SO FAR BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN EFFORTS TO OBTAIN EITHER LEGAL JUSTIFICATION OR PRECISE FUTURE PLANS. GOR RATIONALE WAS WELL-BASED FEAR OF IMMINENT FOLLOW-ON QUAKE. IT NOW APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT, AS LETTER CLAIMS, GOR IS USING EARTHQUAKE AS EXCUSE TO EXERCISE CLOSER CONTROL OVER PREVIOUSLY SEMI-AUTONOMOUS COLLECTIONS IN SMALLER MUSEUMS AND TO CLEAR SOME HISTORICAL BUILDINGS WHICH COULD CONCEIVABLY COMPLICATE EVENTUAL GRANDIOSE PLANS FOR MAJOR

URBAN REPLANNING OF BUCHAREST. SEVERAL MEMBERS OF U.S.
NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORICAL PRESERVATION NOW TOURING
ROMANIA HAVE TOLD US THAT BASED ON THEIR OWN
OBSERVATIONS THEY SHARE SOME OF CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN
LETTER.
BARNES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 06-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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